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Making Espionage Seem Simple

BOOKS Lively Arts

GEHLEN: SPY OF THE CENTURY, By E. H. Cookridge; Random House, $10.
WOMEN IN ESPIONAGE, by J. Bernard Hutton; Macmillan, $5.95.

Reviewed by BERT COLLIER

The late State Department official who urged dismantling the OSS after the war because "gentlemen don't read each other's mail" would be shocked by these two new books on the world of espionage.

Privacy, which is rapidly disappearing for the individual, is a scarce article on the international scene as well. Both these books describe the startling pervasiveness of the spy.

NATIONS not only read each other's mail, they shadow all important public and private officials in other countries and plant agents in the highest councils of any potential enemy.

No secret is safe for long, anywhere, at any level.

Spies, naturally, are not ubiquitous. In fact, invisibility is a requirement. So is dedication, Most famous spies have had no interest in the politics of their spying. No master spy except perhaps Russia's Lavrenti Beria, ever tried to take over his country.

YET THEIR influence has been great. At one time Allen Dulles, boss of the CIA, was called one of the three most powerful men in the world.

By this reckoning, Reinhard Gehlen must have been one of the other two.

Gehlen: Spy of the Century is the story of this man, Hitler's master spy who, scarcely bothering to change his uniform, switched over to our side when Germany went under.

As the CIA's right arm in Europe he used his fascinating experience to continue prying into the hidden recesses of the Kremlin, and was the first man in the West to get a copy of Khrushchev's super-secret address denouncing Stalin and turning Soviet foreign policy around.

It was one of the major coups of modern espionage. Gehlen made it seem simple by his meticulous groundwork.

GEHLEN WAS first of all a spy, and after that a German, a Nazi, or whatever was necessary to do his job which was his passion. He was a mousy little man, unnoticed in any group of more than two persons, yet brilliant, daring and absolutely dedicated.

He served Hitler well, and he performed ably for the CIA. Until his retirement, he ran the intelligence apparatus for West Germany.

Perhaps he was not the architect of the Cold War. But he had a hand in most of the spade work for the West.

His story, told well by a European journalist who was himself a wartime intelligence agent, is almost incredible. While some of the facts rival fiction of the E. Phillips Oppenheim school, the narrative style is not sharp. Ordinary readers will tend to get bogged down in some of the tecnical terms.

For the specialist, however, it is full of fascinating detail. Some of the best passages for U.S. readers are those describing the birth pangs of the CIA, and its dealings in the European area when the Cold War was really hot.

Women in Espionage does not rate such high marks. It is the story of female spies, mostly Russian. Quite a few are mentioned, and some of their deeds out-rival Mission Impossible.

The trouble is that while the style of the book is melodramatic, the facts are not documented and some of the accounts are sketchy.

If there is a Women's Lib in the spy business, however, they will sing praises for this book which states unequivocally that the female is the deadlier.

Bert Collier is a retired Herald editorial writer.